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Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/122, provides an overview of the work of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, in particular the recommendations for grants to beneficiary organizations that were adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund at its twentieth session, held in Geneva from 23 to 27 November 2015. It also provides information on other recommendations adopted by the Board.

* A/71/150.

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I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present report was prepared in accordance with the arrangements approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/122, by which it established the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. It presents the recommendations for grants adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund at its twentieth session, held in Geneva from 23 to 27 November 2015. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved those recommendations on behalf of the Secretary-General on 5 January 2016.

B. Mandate of the Fund

2. In line with resolution 46/122, the Fund was established with the purpose of extending humanitarian, legal and financial aid to individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery. The Fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations, private or public entities and individuals.

C. Administration of the Fund and the Board of Trustees

3. The Secretary-General administers the Fund through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), with the advice of a board of trustees and in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

4. The Board of Trustees is composed of five members with relevant experience in the field of human rights and, in particular, in issues of contemporary forms of slavery. They serve in their personal capacity and are appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard to equitable geographical distribution. The current members of the Board of Trustees are Michael Beresford Dottridge (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), George Omona (Uganda), Renu Rajbhandari (Nepal), Leonardo Sakamoto (Brazil) and Nevena Vučković-Šahović (Serbia), who was appointed Chairperson of the Board at its twentieth session.

II. Management of grants

A. Admissibility criteria

5. In accordance with the mandate of the Fund as set out in General Assembly resolution 46/122, the beneficiaries of assistance from the Fund are individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery. Project admissibility criteria are outlined in the Fund's guidelines. Beneficiaries of projects supported by the Fund must be victims of contemporary forms of slavery and, when applicable, members of their families. Contemporary forms of slavery that qualify for project grants include traditional slavery, serfdom, servitude, forced labour, debt bondage, the worst forms of child labour, forced and early marriage, the sale of wives and inherited widows, trafficking in persons and

human organs, sexual slavery, the sale of children, the commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in hostilities.

6. Priority in allocating grants is accorded to projects aimed at reparation, empowerment and integration of victims of contemporary forms of slavery through direct assistance. This may include medical, psychological, social, legal, humanitarian and educational assistance, vocational or skills training or other assistance in support of an independent livelihood. Detailed information on the types of assistance provided through the projects financed by the Fund, as well as their impact on beneficiaries, can be found at www.ohchr.org/slaveryfund. Brochures and leaflets on the Fund are also displayed there.

7. By 1 March 2015, the deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2016, the Fund had received 120 applications. After the applications were pre-screened by the secretariat of the Fund, 94 were declared admissible and were examined by the Board at its twentieth session.

8. The deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2017 was 1 March 2016. Admissible applications will be examined by the Board at its twenty-first session, to be held in Geneva from 28 November to 2 December 2016.

B. Monitoring and evaluation by the secretariat of the Fund

9. At its twentieth session, the Board was presented with 94 admissible applications for project grants for 2016. Before the session, 13 of the project proposals had been evaluated through on-site visits by staff of the secretariat of the Fund, OHCHR country and regional offices, human rights components of peacekeeping missions and members of the Board of Trustees.

III. Financial situation of the Fund

10. Notwithstanding the persistent fundraising and outreach efforts of the members of the Board and the secretariat of the Fund, including the dissemination of diverse publications on the Fund's role in supporting organizations providing direct assistance to victims and on the stories of victims supported by the Fund's grantees, the Fund remains underfunded. Between 2009 and 2015, as a consequence of the global financial crisis, annual voluntary contributions to the Fund fell from $886,482 in 2009 to $514,688 in 2015. To meaningfully fulfil its mandate and adequately respond to the needs of victims, the Fund requires at least $2 million in contributions each year. The contributions received in 2015 covered only a quarter of that target.

11. The table below shows the contributions and pledges received in 2015.

Contributions and pledges received in 2015

(United States dollars)

Donor	*Amount*	*Date of receipt*
Australia	143 397.86	9 December 2015
Germany	265 111.35	24 March 2015
Holy See	2 500.00	28 October 2015
India	25 000.00	26 January 2015
Luxembourg	10 834.24	27 April 2015
Netherlands	30 000.00	16 November 2015
South Africa	7 845.00	30 March 2015
United Arab Emirates	30 000.00	30 March 2015
Total	**514 688.45**	

IV. Twentieth session of the Board of Trustees

12. The twentieth session of the Board of Trustees was held in Geneva from 23 to 27 November 2015. With the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fund in 2016, the Board and the secretariat of the Fund devoted two days of the session to take stock of the Fund's achievements and challenges over the past two decades. The stocktaking exercise culminated in the adoption of a new mission statement for the Fund. The Board also held meetings with relevant stakeholders, Member States, the Director of the Human Rights Treaties Division, and the External Outreach Service of OHCHR to discuss the critical financial situation of the Fund and strategies to enhance its visibility and positioning.

A. Grant-making recommendations

13. At the beginning of the session, the Board was presented with 94 applications for project grants, amounting to some $2.1 million, which had been pre-screened and evaluated by the secretariat of the Fund. It decided to accord priority to the review of 57 projects that had been highly recommended for funding by the secretariat. Through a competitive review based on both geographic and thematic criteria, it recommended the approval of 42 project grants, for a total of $580,100. The shortage of available funding meant that the Board could not increase the average grant size to $20,000, as it had recommended at its eighteenth session.

14. Through those grants, in 2016 the Fund will assist non-governmental organizations in 34 countries by supporting 12 projects in Asia, 11 in Africa, 4 in Eastern Europe, 7 in Latin America and the Caribbean and 8 in the countries of the Western European and other States group. Through the awarded projects, more than 10,000 victims are expected to be provided with redress and rehabilitation services after having been subjected to contemporary forms of slavery, such as the worst forms of child labour, domestic servitude, forced and early marriage, bonded and forced labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons for labour and sexual exploitation.

15. Figures I and II illustrate the breakdown of the 42 approved grants for 2016, by region and by type of contemporary slavery.

Figure I
Grants awarded in 2016, by region

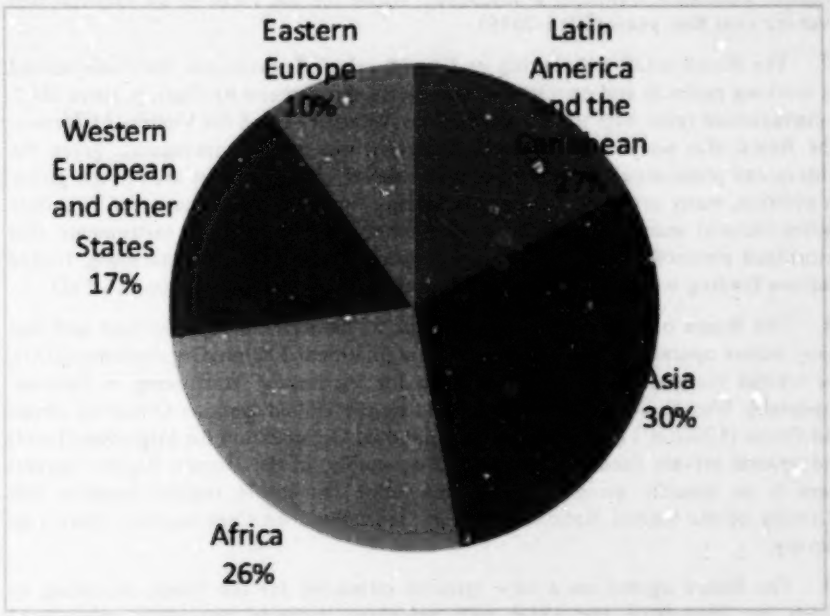
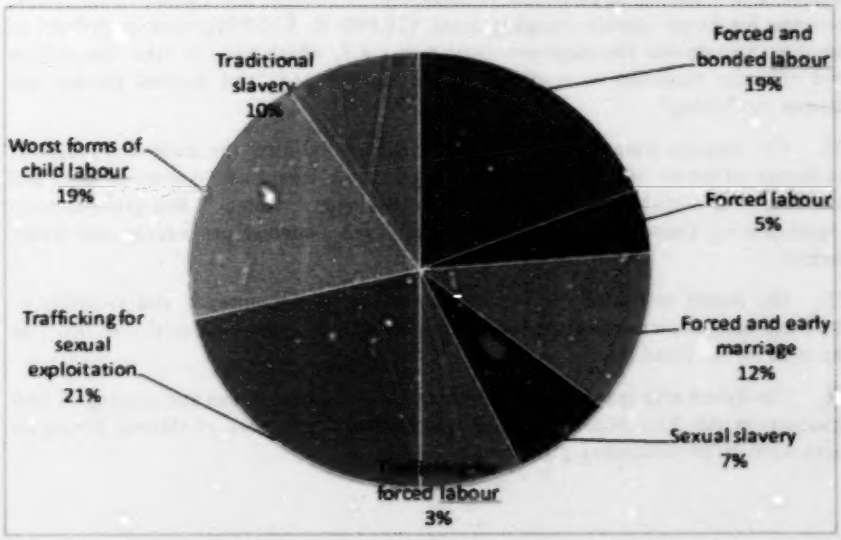


Figure II
Grants awarded in 2016, by type of contemporary slavery


Traditional slavery 10%
Forced and bonded labour 19%
Worst forms of child labour 19%
Forced labour 5%
Trafficking for sexual exploitation 21%
Forced and early marriage 12%
Sexual slavery 7%
forced labour 3%

B. Policy recommendations

16. At its twentieth session, the Board also took stock of the Fund's achievements over the past two decades. That timely reflection was enriched by several discussions with relevant actors and culminated in the adoption of the Fund's new mission statement, outlining a sharpened vision for the Fund to be implemented over the next four years (2016-2019).

17. The Board noted that, during its first 25 years of operations, the Fund refined its working methods and operated in a cost-effective manner by sharing, since 2012, a management team with the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. The Board also noted that the demand for aid was steadily increasing, given the widespread phenomena of exploitation and slavery-like practices around the globe. In addition, many organizations sought funding from the Fund because of its unique victim-focused mandate, compared with other existing funding instruments that prioritized prevention and/or technical cooperation activities. Furthermore, United Nations funding was seen as a politically neutral and non-selective source of aid.

18. The Board observed that the landscape of modern slavery was vast and that many actors operated in it, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, managed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and several private funding initiatives. Regrettably, in the Human Rights Council there is no specific mechanism (i.e. resolution) to ensure regular mention and visibility of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

19. The Board agreed on a new mission statement for the Fund, according to which in 2016-2019 the Fund will prioritize projects providing specialized assistance to victims; give preference to project applications that propose activities spanning a number of years to ensure continuity and greater impact; prioritize women and children, in particular in situations of conflict and humanitarian crises; provide for larger grants (ranging from $20,000 to $30,000); and contribute to meeting Sustainable Development Goal target 8.7, which aims to take "immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour" and "end modern slavery and human trafficking".

20. The mission statement was widely disseminated after the session through an exchange of letters between the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Fund and several stakeholders, including Member States, non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and funds, special procedures and treaty bodies.

21. The Board reiterated the importance of increasing outreach and visibility of the Fund and recommended the production in 2016 of a short promotional video on the work of the Fund.

22. The Board also recommended holding a day of discussions and sharing of best practices in the field of rehabilitation and redress for victims of slavery during its next session (28 November-2 December 2016).

C. Cooperation with Member States, United Nations agencies and mechanisms

23. During the session, the Board held meetings with mechanisms to combat modern slavery, agencies and Member States. Follow-up meetings were held in the ensuing intersessional period. In particular, the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Fund briefed the Committee on the Rights of the Child on 27 May 2016.

24. On 23 November 2015, the Board held a meeting with the Senior Programme and Operations Officer for the ILO Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour. Both parties highlighted the importance of strengthening coordination between the Fund and relevant ILO units, in view of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal target 8.7.

25. On 26 November 2015, the Board held a meeting with representatives of Member States to illustrate the new mission statement and the Fund's priorities for the next four years. The priorities of the Fund's mission statement were well received by the State representatives present. During that meeting, the idea of creating a Group of Friends of the Fund was raised.

26. The Board also held a conference call with the secretariat of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, during which it was agreed to continue coordination, in particular by sharing lists of applicants and grantees to avoid funding overlaps, as well as practices in terms of provision of assistance to victims, project monitoring and trust fund management. The Board also held a conference call with the Executive Vice-President of the Global Fund to End Slavery to discuss collaboration.

D. Mission statement of the Fund of 26 November 2016

27. The following new mission statement was adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund on 26 November 2016:

The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery:

1. Has a universal and victim-centred mandate stipulated in United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/122;

2. Supports projects that are implemented by civil society actors for the protection of the human rights of children and adults whose rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery;

3. Provides specialized assistance to victims, aimed at redress, rehabilitation and broader remedies and future prevention; assistance may include medical, psychosocial, legal and humanitarian aid, and education or vocational training;

4. Forms partnerships with both grass-roots initiatives and well-established organizations providing specialized assistance to victims, by awarding annual grants of up to $30,000 for a maximum of five consecutive years;

5. Is managed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

6. Contributes to meeting Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 8.7 to "[t]ake immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour [and] end modern slavery and human trafficking";

7. Works in synergy with all relevant United Nations programmes and mechanisms so as to enhance the collective response to slavery worldwide, and aspires to work in a complementary manner with relevant public-private initiatives;

8. Achieves its goals thanks to contributions from United Nations Member States, as well as private individual and corporate donors.

In the period 2016-2019, the Fund will prioritize project applications that provide specialized assistance to victims of slave labour and slavery-like practices, especially women and children, in particular as a consequence of conflict and humanitarian crises.

E. International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

28. The Secretary-General made the following statement to commemorate the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, observed on 2 December 2015:

This International Day for the Abolition of Slavery is more than a reminder of past crimes — it is a chance to renew our resolve to combat contemporary problems.

Slavery has many modern forms, from the children toiling as domestic servants, farmhands and factory workers, to the bonded labourers struggling to pay off ever-mounting debts, to the victims of sex trafficking who endure horrific abuse.

Although statistics about these crimes are difficult to compile, experts estimate that nearly 21 million people are enslaved in our world today. We have a responsibility to them — and to all those at risk — to end this outrage.

This is all the more important in our era of severe humanitarian crises. More than 60 million people have been driven from their homes. They may be at risk of trafficking and enslavement — along with millions of others crossing borders in search of a better life.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers an opportunity to fundamentally alter the conditions that fuel poverty, injustice and gender discrimination. By adopting it, world leaders committed to strengthen prosperity, peace and freedom for all people. They specifically set the objectives of eradicating forced labour and human trafficking — and ending all forms of modern slavery and child labour.

As we strive to achieve these targets, we must also rehabilitate freed victims and help them integrate into society. The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery has for more than two decades extended humanitarian, financial and legal assistance to tens of thousands of victims around the world, making a meaningful difference in their lives. I urge Member States, businesses, private foundations and other donors to

demonstrate their commitment to ending slavery by ensuring that this Fund has the resources to fulfil its mandate.

On this International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, let us resolve to use the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a road map for stamping out root causes and freeing all enslaved people in our world.

V. How to contribute to the Fund

29. The Fund depends on voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities. Donors should indicate 'for the Slavery Fund, account SH" on a payment order. For information on how to contribute, donors are requested to contact:

Secretariat of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations
CH 1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland
E-mail: slaveryfund@ohchr.org
Tel: 41 22 917 9376
Fax: 41 22 917 9017
www.ohchr.org/slaveryfund

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

30. Owing to the funding constraints, at its twentieth session the Board of Trustees was able to recommend only 42 grants for 2016, for a total of $580,100. I fully share the concerns of the Board about the insufficient level of contributions received and support its call for at least $2 million each year to meaningfully fulfil its mandate to support victims.

31. To enhance the Fund's relevance and impact, a new mission statement will guide the work of the Fund in 2016-2019. Accordingly, the Fund will prioritize projects providing specialized assistance to victims; give preference to project applications that propose activities spanning a number of years to ensure continuity and greater impact; prioritize women and children, in particular in situations of conflict and humanitarian crises; provide for larger grants (ranging from $20,000 to $30,000); and contribute to meeting Sustainable Development Goal target 8.7, which aims to take "immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour" and "end modern slavery and human trafficking".

32. As the Board has noted, the demand for aid is steadily increasing, given the widespread phenomena of exploitation and slavery-like practices around the globe. Many organizations providing life-saving and reintegration programmes for victims of slavery seek funding from the Fund because of its unique victim-focused mandate, compared with other existing funding instruments that prioritize prevention and/or technical cooperation activities.

33. **The Board has observed that the landscape of modern slavery is vast and that many actors operate in it, including ILO, the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, managed by UNODC in Vienna, IOM and several private funding initiatives. Sustainable Development Goal target 8.7 provides a timely opportunity to enhance cooperation among relevant actors in order to respond more effectively to the plight of millions of victims of modern slavery.**

34. **As stressed in my message to mark the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery (2 December 2015), Member States, businesses, foundations and other potential donors are strongly encouraged to support the Fund so that it can provide crucial rehabilitation assistance to victims of modern slavery worldwide. Contributions should reach the Fund before November 2016 for them to be duly recorded by the United Nations Treasurer in advance of the twenty-first session of the Board, to be held from 28 November to 2 December 2016.**